YAHOO! MAIL Classic

Re: The Revolutionary Tuesday, July 31, 2012 6:03 PM

From: "Carolyn Wakeman" <wakemancarolyn@gmail.com>
To: "Irv Drasnin" <ied@sbcglobal.net>

Irv,

I just watched the final chapters of your quite amazing film. How essential are the modulations of your voice; how astute are your questions (what is it we don't know about the CR, which he totally dodged); how brilliant was your decision to show nothing but Sidney speaking and the beautifully traversed propaganda posters; how important is your choice of music. I am captivated and carried back, not only to the events but also to the retrospection.

Last night I was wondering what Sidney did during the anti-rightist movement if he considered that the biggest mistake he made, given his actions still to come in the CR. But in the film's later chapters there is more self-recognition. He acknowledges his infatuation with the power and the glory--but there's always a disconnect. Next he asserts that he couldn't let go because he was working for freedom and happiness (his comrades would have mercilessly struggled against him for such an individualistic and bourgeois idea). You deftly yet subtly draw out these clashing assertions, and perhaps most astute of the film's disclosures is the arrogance and absurdity of Sidney's identification with Mao--believing that he too could change history rather than (the only acknowledged alternative) being just a piece of mud.

I just looked unsuccessfully in the basement for David and Nancy Milton's early memoir The Wind Will Not Subside. I can't remember what they write about Sidney, but they were dedicated English teachers with leftist backgrounds who joined the other CR faction, then left China, reluctantly, when they saw what was unfolding. Perhaps you know their account.

Thanks again for sending me the CD, and I look forward already to your next film.

Carolyn

On Tue, Jul 31, 2012 at 5:57 PM, Irv Drasnin <ied@sbcglobal.net> wrote:

> Carolyn, I couldn't be more pleased or gratified with your reaction to the film. Thank you. And I am intrigued by your comments about Sidney. Except for reading his book, I didn't know much about him before starting the film (I've always had a certain wariness when it comes to the credibility of ex-pats who've spent their lives working in the cause of foreign governments). Over the course of five years I interviewed him four times --- at times informally, as in his home library, and I was certainly struck by how similar his answers were to certain questions and your comments ring true. On the other hand, during Q and A

following screenings of the film, it is often his answers to questions about PRC policies and practices today that make me stand up and say that he and I do not agree on everything before adding my caveat. He is a fascinating character in many ways. Once you've finished screening the film please don't hesitate to add any further thoughts you might have. And, again, many thanks for your generous response. All my best. Irv

--- On **Mon, 7/30/12, Carolyn Wakeman <wakemancarolyn@gmail.com>** wrote:

> From: Carolyn Wakeman <wakemancarolyn@gmail.com>
> Subject: Re: The Revolutionary
> To: "Irv Drasnin" <ied@sbcglobal.net>
> Date: Monday, July 30, 2012, 6:21 PM
>
> Dear Irv,
>
> Your film arrived today and I have just watched through most of the CR, until I had to stop and wait to absorb the rest in a second sitting. I love hearing your voice again, and the brilliant pacing, the gaping pauses, the quiet contextual comments and counterpoint, the wonderfully evocative use of posters, the simple, pointed questions.
>
> And you capture Sidney perfectly. But while I appreciate what often seems to me his astute and balanced insight about issues in China today, I can barely stand to hear anew what he has said over and again about the past. Of course, I know better than to expect anything different. So rehearsed and reiterated are those recollections that there is no chance anything fresh (dare I say genuine?) will emerge. Not just for Sidney, of course.
>
> And so you plunge me back into that time of blind zealotry with its massive suffering and pointless destruction. Your film is gripping. Thank you very much for sending me a copy, and congratulations on your fine achievement.
>
> Carolyn
>
> On Mon, Jul 30, 2012 at 2:24 PM, Irv Drasnin <ied@sbcglobal.net> wrote:
>> Carolyn, I was most pleased to see your exchange of emails with Suzanne and fascinated by your past connection to the Rittenbergs. A DVD of the film is on its on its way to you with my warm regards. Irv

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